

European Trash Cinema

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Spaghetti Western villain.
Fernando Sancho.**

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European Trash Cinema is published not as often as I would like but if you pay for 4 issues, you will get 4 issues, so give me a break! A 4 issue subscription is \$20 and should be made out to European Trash Cinema and sent to Craig Ledbetter, P.O. Box 5367, Kingwood, TX 77325. All copyrights to the material contained in ETC revert to the original contributor. European Trash Cinema is copyright Craig Ledbetter

EDITORIAL

As of this issue, Toru Weissler of VSOM will no longer publish ETC. I have also decided to quit as co-editor of Asian Trash Cinema to devote all my time to producing ETC. Send all *ASIAN Trash Cinema* subscriptions (both renewals and new ones) to VSOM, P.O. Box 16-1917, Miami, FL 33116-1917. Meanwhile, my goal is to get ETC back on track and actually produce 4 issues in 12 months!

I have always felt that information is what it's all about. With that in mind, it's time to hear from the readers on what direction you want ETC to take. Do you enjoy the wide open approach of this issue-covering Crime films, Spaghetti Westerns and Jesus Franco films-or do you want me to narrow the focus and concentrate each issue on a specific genre (say horror or sleaze)? Do you want another all review issue or single out one director in detail? Now's the time to voice your opinion.

You'll note some new and old faces this issue. Douglas Winter kindly offered his essay from the Lucertola issued soundtrack CD to *STAGEFRIGHT*. That CD, plus one devoted to music from the Films of Jean Rollin are now available from me for \$22 (postage paid) each. Also, by the time you read this, the third release from Lucertola, Rix Ortolani's score to Ruggero Deodato's *CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST* will be out so go ahead and order it now (also \$22).

Speaking of Doug Winter, he and Steve Bissette have collaborated on a chapbook titled, *BLACK SUN*. It's best described as a Post-Apocalyptic Spaghetti Western. Doug supplied the text and Steve the artwork. I am proud to be offering it for sale (\$7.50 + \$1.00 postage) so order if interested. Finally, for those who are intrigued by the review of *PERFUME OF A LADY IN BLACK*, I am selling a first generation copy, complete with color video jacket for \$23 (\$20 + \$3 postage). I am also planning on carrying all of the Redemption Video titles as soon as they make their US debut (see my *SHOOTIN' THE SHIT* column).

Finally, special thanks to Video Watchdog's Tim & Donna Lucas for designing this issue's covers. Without their valuable assistance, this issue would have taken even longer to get out. It was much appreciated.



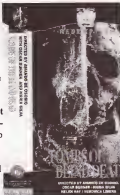
SHOOTIN THE SHIT BY CRAIG LEDBETTER

Good news for US readers of ETC! Later this year, Redemption Video will begin marketing their videos here in America. The other good news is that since the US doesn't have as draconian censorship as Great Britain (not yet, at least), these versions will be uncut. I plan on carrying these videos, so you'll be able to order factory fresh, beautifully boxed pre-records of all your ETC-favorites. More details will be forthcoming so be patient.

Meanwhile, Redemption has introduced a sister label, Jezebel, to their burgeoning line of videos. Jezebel concentrates on the sexy side of things, specializing in British and Italian sexploitation, naughty nuns and even sexy horror films. In the latter category, Redemption has unearthed the extremely rare **BLACK CANDLES** (aka **THE SEXUAL RITES OF THE DEVIL**) by Jose Larraz, a film I had given up on ever seeing.

A duo of silent film releases may be a bit of a surprise from Redemption, until you realize they are of European (Swedish) origin. **HAXAN** (aka **WITCHCRAFT THROUGH THE AGES**) has received quite a bit of coverage over the years, so I won't go into detail. The film's co-star and director, Benjamin Christensen steals the film during the satanic ritual sequence. Made in 1921, Redemption's print is beautiful and the color tinting has been restored. **THE PHANTOM CARRIAGE** is a Swedish silent film about the evils of alcoholism. The scenes of the Phantom carriage and its driver (Death), searching the country side for souls are eerie (especially the ones along a beach). The moral may be heavy handed but the visuals are stunning. Next stop is British sexploitation with **CRUEL KIND** and **COOL IT CAROL**. **CRUEL PASSION** is another variation

on DeSade's *Justine* (see also Jesus Franco's **DEADLY SANCTUARY**) and was covered in ETC #2 (Bob Sargent's review is even quoted on the cover). The real jewel however is Peter Walker's **COOL IT CAROL** (1970). I was only familiar with Walker's horror films (**FRIGHTMARE**, **FLESH AND BLOOD SHOW**, **THE COMEBACK**), so it was nice to be "exposed" to his sexier works. The movie centers on Carol (Janet Lynn) and Joe (Rohin Asquith) as they head off to the big city (London) for fame and fortune. As soon as they arrive however it becomes quite clear that the only way they can survive is for Carol to expose



as much flesh to as many sex-starved old farts as possible. Fortunately, Carol doesn't really mind but as things get more and more sordid, she and Joe decide to call it quits and head home. Without actress Janet Lynn, the film wouldn't be nearly as enjoyable. She's beautiful to look at and more than holds her own in the acting department. Kudos also go to Walker for making Robin Asquith tone down his usual smarminess and actually portray a three dimensional character.

Redemption has also released the definitive director's cut of Amando De Ossorio's **TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD** (1971). Running a full 13 minutes longer than any previous version, this English sub-titled print makes any other obsolete. Scenes are in their proper order, all the violence and nudity are here as well, it's letterboxed, so, what are you waiting for? Thanks to Jezebel, a major discovery new to video is Salvatore Samperi's **THE DARK SIDE OF LOVE** (aka **FOTOGRAFANDO PATRIZIA**, 1984), which centers on a morbid tale of a 16 year old boy who is introduced to the mysteries of sex by the revelations of his 25 year old sister. Each night she recounts her sexual experiences to the boy, eventually driving him to experiment for himself. Monica Guerritore (**EVIL SENSES**) is the star and without question the main reason for seeing this film. Samperi (whose directorial debut was the perverse **GRAZIA ZIA**, 1968 with Lisa Gastoni) concentrates on the perverse discoveries made by the boy and doesn't shy away from the title's Dark Side. **LUST** (**LUSSURIA**) spotlights long-time ETC-fave director, Joe D'Amato. The film stars Lili Carati (who later went on to hard drugs and hardcore porno) in a sordid tale centering on Alessio, a 20 year old "nutter" who repeatedly whines about being abused by the women in the house. Turns out these fantasies actually become real. In true D'Amato fashion, we have beautiful cinematography, lots of exposed female flesh and enough of an offbeat plot to make it worth the watch.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

BROKEN MIRRORS/BROKEN MINDS by Maitland McDonagh, Citadel Press, \$18.95, 298 pages. As Homer Simpson would say, "Woo Hoo!" Finally, an American edition of McDonagh's groundbreaking work on Dario Argento. I never thought I'd see the day a U.S. Publisher would actually produce a book on someone like Argento. It's a fine addition to any ETC-fan's library and even more so because it takes a well-worn subject (at least to the fanzine world) and looks at it with a fresh slant (The only other piece on Argento to do so was John Martin's series of articles in the early days of Samhain). Whoever OK'd this book deal should get a big kiss from Serena Grandi (or if they prefer some Italian hunk actor).

CAMERA OBSCURA #6 - \$6.00, 36 pages, Michael Lebbing, Amkemaheerd 287, 9736 BV Groningen, Netherlands. Interview with makeup man Gianetto Di Rossi, Part 2 of an interview with Jean Rollin (plus a detailed filmography by Simon Smith), Asian film reviews by Thomas Harbach, and an introduction to Hindu Horror Cinema help fill out the issue. An excellent source of info for ETC fans.

CREATURE FEATURES by John Stanley, \$20, 464 pages, 1082 Grand Teton Drive, Pacifica, CA 94044. This is the 4th edition of this groundbreaking work devoted to reviewing as many horror films as possible. Look at it as the Leonard Maltin version of the guide to horror films. Also to Stanley's credit is that he genuinely tries to cover some of the more obscure films around. With over 5500 reviews, you'll be sure to find comments and ratings on whatever's on TV or available for rent at your local Blockbuster. Here's hoping that John can continue this long running series forever.



ONE SHOT PUBLICATIONS: LUAN PETERS, \$5.00 for US readers, Kevin Collins, 2020 East 37th St., Brooklyn, NY 11234. European readers, 1.95pds, Tim Greaves, 118 High St., Eastleigh, Hampshire SO5 5LR UK. Here's a publication after my own heart. Tim takes an actress and then spends 36 pages dissecting her career in words and pictures. Luan Peters may not be a familiar name but if you've seen **TWINS OF EVIL** or **LUST FOR A VAMPIRE** you'll recognize her body. Other One Shot publications include **VAMPYRES** (\$10 or 3 pd) and a tribute to Carmilla on screen (\$10 or 3pds). All come highly recommended and you had better hurry because One Shot publications sell out in a hurry!!

MICHELE SOAVI ENJOYS HIS FAVORITE MAGAZINE. PHOTO COURTESY ERIK SULEV.

SEDUCTION OF THE GULLIBLE by John Martin, \$25, 266 pages, Procustes Press, P.O. Box 134, West PDO, Nottingham, NG7 7BW, UK. By now, most of you have heard all about the hysteria in Great Britain about the "Video Nasty" phenomena. Leave it to John Martin (Which I'll proudly admit is my favorite film journalist in the entire world!) to take a bird's eye view and examine the original list of films (many of which were from Italy and Spain and so of interest to ETC's readership). Read this and vow to never let such a thing happen here!

SEX-MURDER-ART by David Kerekes, \$20, 170 pages, P.O. Box 160, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 4ET, UK. The fine folks at Headpress are now publishing a line of cutting edge books on films. This one covers the works of German filmmaker, Jorg Buttgerit, who people either love or hate. All of his work is covered within these pages, from the early shorts to **NEKROMANTIK** to his latest, **SCHRAMM**. Kerekes has covered Buttgerit since his early days and so is highly qualified to write such an overview of the director's oeuvre. He also chronicles all of the censorship problems associated with such an outlaw filmmaker. Professionally laid out and up to the usual Headpress standards, it's a work I highly recommend.

SHOCKING IMAGES #4, \$4.00, 40 pages, Mark Jason Murray, P.O. Box 7853, Citrus Heights, CA 95621. Another fine issue as Mark continues to establish himself among the newer kids on the block. He's loaded the issue with lots of reviews, interviews with Coffin Joe and Rudy Ray Moore, articles on Cannibal films and Andrew Kenny continues his excellent review of Asian Cinema.

VIDEOOZE #6/7, \$7.00, 46 pages, Bob Sargent, P.O. Box 9911, Alexandria, VA 22304. Bob and Michael Sculatti team up to do the definitive overview on Paul Naschy's career. Forget all the others, this one finally gets it right! Has rare photos, an eyestraining interview, and a detailed filmography.

NICO GIRALDI : A POLICEMAN'S STORY IN ELEVEN CHAPTERS BY ALEX TSIKNIAS

1976 was a fruitful year for the Italian police action film. Three of the best films in this genre were produced, all featuring the unique acting talents of Tomas Milian. **ROMA A MANO ARMATA** a.k.a. **THE TOUGH ONES** (dir. by Umberto Lenzi), **IL TRUCIDO E LO SBIRO** a.k.a. **FREEHAND FOR A TOUGH COP** (dir. by Umberto Lenzi), and **SQUADRA ANTISCIPPO** a.k.a. **THE COP IN BLUE JEANS** (dir. by Bruno Corbucci). In the first two movies, Milian played outlaw characters; a nasty hunch-backed villain in **ROMA ...** and a heroic small time crook in **TRUCIDO...** but while Lenzi couldn't possibly fit Milian's image into more positive role models (with the exception of the Rambo character from **IL GIUSTIZIERE SFIDA LA CITTA** a.k.a. **SYNDICATE SA-DISTS** - he was a vigilante), Bruno Corbucci realized the huge potential of adjusting the policeman archetypes to that very image. And so, Nico Giraldi was born.

We are first introduced to this character, during a chase sequence in a fruit market. A motorbike riding Nico Giraldi chases after a thief, and in the course of the chase, he literally levels the place. This guy is definitely not an ordinary cop. Wool cap, black jacket, jeans and sports shoes make up his wardrobe, a poster of **SERPICO** decorates his room, and his pet canary and mouse are called Lieutenant Callahan and Serpico respectively. Before becoming a policeman, Nico was a thief known as the "Pirate". This criminal past accounts for his straightforward, streetwise persona, and earns him the respect of his colleagues and enemies alike.

A gang of robbers steal a briefcase filled with ransom money from a kidnapping, and are eliminated one by one, by a vicious

squad of killers, led by a "fence" who laundries the dirty money from all criminal activities in Rome. Nico's investigation leads him to an American (played by Jack Palance) who works in the U.S. Embassy. Diplomatic immunity doesn't stop Nico from kicking Palance in the balls, right in the comfort of the latter's embassy office !!!

Nico's girlfriend is played by Maria Rosaria Omaggio (her most memorable role was the zombified sculptress in Lenzi's **NIGHTMARE CITY**). In one scene that's a key to the understanding of Giraldi's character, Omaggio asks him why he's wearing a wool cap, three sweaters and knee high wool socks while sleeping. "At night when I go to sleep, I'm afraid they'll turn off the heat", says Nico. In the obligatory discotheque scene, Nico poses as a pimp, and for credibility's sake, he starts slapping the unsuspecting Omaggio in the face !!! His dancing routines have to be seen to be believed.



Clever scripting by Mario Amendola and Bruno Corbucci, with lots of humorous touches (the humour here is quite vulgar, but a hundred percent effective), solid direction by Bruno Corbucci, great action sequences, Tomas Milian's brilliant performance and the **De Angelis Brothers'** excellent musical score (definitely their best in the police action genre) compose a highly entertaining movie, that proved successful enough to guarantee not one, not two, not even three or four, but ten (count'em) sequels !!!

Before the year was over, Nico Giraldi was back in **SQUADRA ANTIFURTO** a.k.a. **HIT SQUAD**. The film is practically a remake of **COP IN BLUE JEANS**. Replace the stolen briefcase with a notepad of information on corrupt political officers, and the Jack Palance character with an ex-CIA agent (played by Robert Webber) who uses the notepad to blackmail those officers, and voila, you have the plot of **HIT SQUAD**.

But that's only the framework. For starters, we get to see Nico hurst out of a closet (which was used by burglars as a means of robbing apartments - the closet was placed in the apartment, containing one of the gang, who filled it with valuable stuff, and then taken back to the gang's den, by fake delivery men), and kick the hell out of the gang members.

We also see him invade other people's houses wearing an expensive hat, a silk shirt, red underpants and open-toe sleepers !!! This guy definitely has a sense of style. Moreover, a permanent supporting cast is cleverly re-introduced (Commissioner Tozzi, Sergeant Garzullo, Inspector Trentini and Private Ballarin, who were all in the previous movie, are given more screen time, and they are put in situations where distinct aspects of their characters are revealed).

More information on Nico's "Pirate" past is revealed with the introduction of a childhood friend, whose sudden (and shocking) murder, leads to the single most important addition to the multi-dimensional profile of Nico Giraldi, that this film offers: the man cries. This extra human touch is the link that unites all the facets of Nico Giraldi's personality into an exceptional whole.

Two actors who would become regulars in the series, appear here in supporting parts: comedian Bomholo plays Trippa, a small time crook (a character not unlike his future "Venticello" part), who is forced by Nico to eat his own shit. Olimpia di Nardo plays the girlfriend of a murdered burglar, who in a hilarious scene, is interrogated by Nico

during sexual intercourse (Nico tells her that in order to reach a climax he has to hear the names and addresses of the murdered man's friends !). She would later become Mrs. Giraldi. Lilli Carati plays Nico's stewardess girlfriend.

Guido and Maurizio De Angelis provide another excellent score, with an incredible title song (I can't help being pissed off at how the De Angelis "Best Of ..." compilation albums contain all their shitty tracks like "Dune Buggy" and "Zorro's Back" and never their really good ones).

In 1977 comes the third **SQUADRA** film: **SQUADRA ANTITRUFFA** a.k.a. **SWINDLE**. (Notice how Nico's police department constantly changes names? For the record, **SCIPPO** and **FURTO** both mean theft, while **TRUFFA** means fraud). This one marks the inclusion of Bomholo as Venticello in the permanent cast. The film opens with Venticello wringing money out of some poor fellow, only to lose it to Nico's strong hand (which also slaps him hard in the face). This plot motif, would be repeated countless times in future films of the series, provoking as much laughter as the first. Nico's outfit is different from that of the previous two movies. He now wears a car repairman's blue uniform, and a variety of eccentric hats and caps. His natural hair is inexplicably replaced with a curly wig. This look will be retained for the entirety of the series. Close ups of Nico's eyes reveal extensive make up.

Nico teams up with a detective from Lloyds of London (played by David Hemmings), to investigate a series of murders. The interplay between the phlegmatic nature of the British detective, and Nico's Mediterranean temperament provides some great comical moments. The focus of Amendola and Corbucci's script shifts from the typical gangster vs cop scenario to more complicated stories with a strong mystery element.

Dynamic action sequences include Nico's raid on a gambling house that ends in a

big fight (similar to those found in a Terence Hill/Bud Spencer movie), an absolutely fantastic chase on the roofs (what would an Italian police movie be without a lengthy roof-chase sequence?), and a breathtaking car chase on the streets of San Francisco that culminates in one innocent bystander's extremely realistic-looking fall from a small cliff.

In a grand moment of Mediterranean vulgarity, Nico looks for Venticello in the latter's apartment. Venticello is hiding in the closet, but he's given away by the sound of a deafening fart !!! In the end, Nico receives a Sherlock Holmes-type hat as a present from Hemmings. The De Angelis Brothers' score is as good as always.

Next was 1978's **SQUADRA ANTIMAFIA**, a film that unfortunately still eludes me. Eli Wallach is the guest star this time. Lilli Carati is back, probably playing a different character than the stewardess she played in **SQUADRA ANTIFURTO**. Enzo Cannavale plays Salvatore Esposito, a character who also appears in the next movie along with Bombolo.

In 1979 came **SQUADRA ANTIGANGSTER** (a.k.a. **THE GANG THAT SOLD AMERICA**), the last of the **SQUADRA** movies. It seems that Amendola and Corbucci had already decided that Nico was going to get married in the next film, so they let him have fun in what could be best described as the Bachelor Party film of the series.

The heads of the U.S. Cosa Nostra Organisation gather together a large amount of money in order to deposit it in a Swiss bank for the highest and safest profit possible. A greedy member of the Organisation has a plan to rip the rest of the gang off. Nico uses this plan to his advantage, and posing as a hired killer, manages to apprehend the whole gang single-handed. Enzo Cannavale returns as Salvatore Esposito, who in this film owns a restaurant that can't get an operating license, resulting in his being up to his neck in debt.

Unwillingly, he ends having to help Nico in his mission.

This overly energetic entry in the series is filled with exciting action sequences. Lots of hand to hand fights, car chases, a breathtaking motorboat chase in the swamps of Florida, and even some swordplay gets thrown in for good measure.

Disco queen Asha Puthli, who is absolutely the sexiest, most captivating beauty to ever appear in a Giraldi movie, plays the girlfriend of a Cosa Nostra boss, who turns out to be a federal agent. She also performs two outstanding songs - her 'Whip' number will raise your body temperature to unimaginable levels.

The rest of the soundtrack is written by **GOBLIN** (including a Charlie Cannon performed song). No doubt the soundtrack collectors among you who own the "GOBLIN'S GREATEST HITS" album, were wondering about the origins of "DISCO CHINA" and "SQUADRA" tracks. Now you know. Nico delivers a great line near the end, addressed to the Cosa Nostra boss: "Do you wash your face in a lavatory, or in the bidet - cause you look like an arse" !!

After five movies in a row, you'd expect the series to start showing signs of wear, but fortunately, that's not the case here. **ASSASSINIO SUL TEVERE** (1979) is easily the best Giraldi film so far. This time around, Nico investigates the murder of a member of a navigation company's board of directors. The man's widow (played by Marina Lante Della Rovere) is just the kind of woman you'd throw yourself into the fire for, without a second thought, so naturally, she can't be innocent.

Gambiati, the new Commissioner, orders the arrest of Pina, a friend of Nico's, who's a suspect in the murder. His daughter Angela, moves into Nico's apartment, and turns his life upside down. At first, Nico ignores her obvious affection towards him, and flirts with the voluptuous widow. But Angela is unlike any other woman in Nico's

life. While not a blinding beauty, the woman has character, and Nico finds himself unable to resist her, as she yells, slaps, and kicks her way into his heart.

Nico in this film among other things : a) keeps a pet horse in his house. b) uses foul language in the presence of a stiff-assed public prosecutor, making Gambiati blush. c) interrupts twice, attempted fraud by Venticello. d) embarrasses himself in front of Angela, by letting out a big fart, and unconvincingly tries to blame it on the horse.

And speaking of horses, one amazing sequence has Nico armed with a shotgun, riding on a great looking white horse, chasing after some car riding suspects. The whole sequence is scored to a brilliant spaghetti western tune, by none other than Carlo Rustichelli.



I've saved the best for last : If you think you've seen it all, then think again. The

sequence I'm about to describe has to be one of the most outrageous in cinema history. In order to get in touch with a musicians' impresario suspect, Nico somehow manages to enter a song competition. Dressed in a glowing red outfit, complete with glowing red hat and non-glowing red sports shoes, performs an incredibly trashy Rocky Roberts song, accompanied by a chorus of ugly transvestites !!! "Hey, this guy has the style of Rocky Roberts" remarks the impresario. In the end, Nico marries Angela, with Venticello as best man. Roberta Manfredi plays Angela for the first and last time in this film.

In 1980, a new cycle of Giraldo movies began : The DELITTO (Crime) films. **DELITTO A PORTA ROMANA** was the first in this new series. Nico is on vacation with Angela (who's eight and a half months pregnant) and her deaf grandmother. He has to cut it short though, because Venticello has been arrested for murder in Milan. Nico learns that during a burglary, Venticello witnessed a murder. The only clue to the murderer's identity is a scar across the ankle of his right leg.

While in Milan, Nico installs his camper van in the police station's courtyard ! As if the constant nagging of Angela wasn't enough, Nico has to deal with the strict Milan commissioner (played by character actor Leo Gavaro, who appears throughout the series in different roles), who always scolds him for his unorthodox methods and undisciplined behaviour. And in the meantime, Venticello is being sexually molested by a huge homosexual fellow prisoner, who wants to marry him!

This film is quite unique in its combination of tragic and hilarious situations that's perfectly balanced and in harmony with the police action/mystery structure. The final twenty minutes will have you glued to the edge of your seat as Venticello is about to undergo a lethal heart operation by the murderous surgeon. Nico rushes to his rescue dragging along (in the camper van) Angela

who's about to domino any minute. He manages to stop the operation in time, but the surgeon escapes, stealing Nico's van with Angela, her granny and a male nurse in it! Nico chases after him on a motorbike, and finally manages to capture him. But that's not enough, because he wants his child to be born in Rome! So another race against time begins! This overdose of suspenseful action has never been equaled since, not even in the overly-energetic new wave Hong Kong movies. And speaking of Hong Kong movies, did I mention that this film contains a sequence where a rollerskating Giral di chases after a car in traffic, that's very similar to the one in Samo Hung's **WINNERS AND SINNERS** (which was made three years *AFTER DELITTO...*)?

In the end Angela gives birth to a boy named Rocky, after the Stallone character, and Venticello is the godfather. Angela from this film and on, would be played by Olimpia di Nardo. Franco Micalizzi, one of the most underrated Italian composers, provides a very good score.

Milani gets to play two characters in **DELITTO AL RISTORANTE CINESE** (1981). Of course, as every Italian police movie buff knows, the actor is no stranger to such roles - he's done the same in Lenzi's **LA BANDA DEL GOBBO (BROTHERS TILL WE DIE)** back in 1977, where he played two familiar characters from past successes. Naturally, one of the characters here, is Nico Giral di. The other is the Oriental that first appeared in Sergio Corbucci's **IL BIANCO, IL GIALLO, E IL NERO** (1974), which is the only Corbucci western that I can't stand watching, because of that very character. I understand that some people adore this character, and I respect their opinion (even if they are of the semi-illiterate type, with the sense of humour of an hippopotamus), but his non stop babbling with that extremely irritating voice, is really an endurance test for my nerves.

So, what we have here is something like Charlie Chan meets Nico Giral di, only the

two characters never actually meet in this movie! Well, they do meet just once, but the Oriental and Nico are in separate rooms, so we never get to see them together.

In a Chinese restaurant, a customer is found dead of arsenic poisoning. The police (i.e. Nico) investigates, and so do the Oriental and Bombolo (who are both staff members of the restaurant). But, wait a minute here - Bombolo actually has a job in this film? Well, apparently he has, and even though his character is virtually the same as Venticello's, in this film he's referred to as Bombolo!!!

And as if the Oriental's presence and Bombolo's character name change weren't enough to piss off any hardcore fan of the series, throughout the movie Nico has a broken leg wrapped in plaster, and carries a cane (which true to his character is candy-like) !!! But it's interesting to see how he manages to participate in the action, overcoming his disability. In this movie's one and only major action sequence, Nico drives a car (using his one good leg and his cane on the pedals) chasing after a suspect in a nitroglycerine-filled factory.

Unfortunately, half of the screen time belongs to the Oriental guy, but half a Giral di movie is better than no Giral di movie at all. Enzo Cannavale plays the restaurant's owner - no relation to Salvatore Esposito. Music is by Detto Marriano.

DELITTO SULL AUTOSTRADA

(1982) is the second elusive film of the series, so I can't comment on it. It guest stars Viola Valentino.

The series would soon come to an end, but not before it reached its peak. **DELITTO IN FORMULA UNO** (1984) is a masterpiece and a half - one of the best movies I've ever seen, in any genre, from any country. The plot brings Nico to Milan, to investigate the murder by sabotage of a Formula 1 driver. Meanwhile Fattizio, Nico's brother-in-law and a small time thief, discovers a corpse in the trunk of a stolen car. The body belongs to the publicity department manager of the dead

pilot's team. Nico covers up for Fabrizio, reporting that he found the car by chance. A bureaucratic examining magistrate who takes an instant dislike to Nico, finds out that the car was stolen by his brother-in-law, and orders Nico's suspension and Fabrizio's arrest.

Over the years, Mario Amendola and Bruno Corbucci have managed to present not only a bunch of solid and entertaining police action stories, but also something much more substantial : a group of central characters who are believable and likeable, and grow more mature from movie to movie. This film brings all those familiar characters closer together, strengthening the bonds of friendship and understanding that unite them. Nico shouts at Trentini, but Trentini understands. Fabrizio is a stubborn troublemaker, but Nico helps him, because he reminds him of his restless youth. Even when Nico slaps Venticello in the face, this is done almost tenderly. Angela and Nico's relationship is stronger than ever here. In a truly brilliant scene, Nico, who's just lost his job sits alone in his car and cries, while Toto Cotugno's "L' ITALIANO" is heard on the radio. Then Angela comes and consoles him. After lots of tender words, bugs and kisses, Nico decides to continue his investigation. You may call me a sentimental fool, but each time I watch this scene, I can't hold back my tears. And this sentimentality is retained throughout the film, up to the very end, when Nico is accepted back on the force, his honour restored, and the magistrate apologises to him. Nico responds to this, by pouring champagne all over him. The magistrate seems insulted at first, but then bursts into laughter. "We are only human after all" he seems to be saying, closing one of the most rewarding cinematic experiences ever.

Tomas Milian delivers the performance of his life, presenting a more vulnerable, more caring and more human Nico Giraldi. His combination of hand movements and facial expressions is a joy to behold and his delirious vocalizations are more entertaining than ever.

It has to be noted here, that although Nico Giraldi is the creation of Corbucci and Amendola, it's Milian himself who further developed the character, by writing his own dialogue, and even choosing his (always eccentric) wardrobe.

This film also features : a spectacular auto chase with Formula 1 cars in the narrow streets of Monza! Nico bursting out of a parcel (!) in a post office and kicking some poor robbers' asses! Nico performing an amazing dance number in an aerobics class that puts John Travolta to shame (though an obvious stunt double is used)!

Fabio Frizzi composes a great soundtrack that's easily his best non-horror work. In the ultimate in-joke scene, Nico turns the tv on only to find that all stations show Lucio Fulci movies (we hear music from **PAURA NELLA CITTA DEI MORTI VIVENTI**, **L'ALDILA**, and **MANHATTAN BABY** - all Frizzi compositions - as Nico switches channels)!!! By all means do see this film - you'll feel much better afterwards. The film also stars Pino Colizzi and Dagmar Lassander.

"My name is Nico Giraldi, and what you're watching is the first piece of action I found myself involved in as a cop", says a voice over the opening credits of the English version of **DELITTO AL BLUE GAY** (a.k.a. **COP IN DRAG** - 1984). What we are actually watching is a chase sequence from **LA BANDA DEL GOBBO**. As the credits roll on, we are also watching an irrelevant chase sequence from **SILENT ACTION** (**LA POLIZIA ACCUSA : IL SERVIZIO SEGRETO UCCIDE**, 1975, directed by Sergio Martino) and even **COP IN BLUE JEANS**, while the same voice tries unsuccessfully to convince us that all those scenes are from Giraldi's first mission. Yeah, sure.

Finally the real movie begins, with the murder of a transvestite cabaret artist, which takes place in his/her dressing room during a black out. After that, Trentini, riding in a police car asks the driver : "Do you know where Inspector Giraldi is?", to which the

latter replies : "Chasing the Baron". "Oh, yes" says Trentini, and once again we are submitted to an irrelevant chase sequence from **COP IN BLUE JEANS**.

A heavier than ever Nico Giraldi (he's put at least 30 pounds on since the first film of the series) is assigned the case, and is ordered to go undercover and "befriend" the murdered artist's main rival, Colomba Lamar. Nico tells Angela (who's recently had a second baby) he's going on a mission to New York, and moves into Venticello's apartment. He spends the rest of the film either slapping Venticello in the face, or trying to escape being seduced by the lascivious Colomba. Despite what the English title might suggest, Nico doesn't get in drag here. It's Venticello who does, posing as Nico's major love interest. The final thirty minutes of the film takes place in Berlin, where Nico uncovers a secret Organisation that has kidnapped a nuclear scientist. Don't ask me how this ties in with the rest of the plot ; it's beyond my perceptive capabilities.

Short on logic, hastily made and filled with kitschy musical numbers (including a totally gratuitous break dancing sequence that's guaranteed to turn your stomach), **DELITTO AL BLUE GAY** is a real let down for fans of the series, especially after the incredible **DELITTO IN FORMULA UNO** that preceded it. But it is a Giraldi movie, and it's not without its entertaining moments, such as the sequence where Nico, riding in an ancient Roman chariot, and dressed up like an ancient Roman soldier, chases after a suspect, only to be stopped by traffic officers. Ultimately, though, it's an unworthy finale to a great series.

In closing, I have to point out that in order to fully appreciate these films, they should be seen in their original Italian language form, possibly with subtitles. A great deal of the fun emanates from the dialogue, and the way the cast members deliver their lines. The Italian language has a special rhythm to it that just can't be retained

in the English dubbing. For example, Milian usually drags on the last syllable of a phrase. In the dubbed version, this results in Milian finishing a sentence before closing his mouth, and being left open mouthed for several seconds (after the sentence is over), which just looks plain stupid. Last but not least, the dialogue is filled with idiomatic expressions, and puns that are almost impossible to translate into English. Still, if you aren't fluent in Italian, seeing them dubbed in English is better than ignoring the series altogether.



ASHARTEPILLOM SQUATTA
ANTIGANGSTER

Many thanks to Gianluca Cassoldi who provided me with several of the films.

INTERVIEW WITH ALBERTO DE MARTINO



ETC- Is it true you started in the movie-business as a child-actor?

Yes, my father Romolo De Martino was a famous make-up artist here in Italy. Because of that I spent a lot of time on the sets of productions my father was working on and I became known to many people in the business. I started acting at the age of six, so I have been involved in the movie-making-process for over half a century. My very first film as a child-actor was produced around 1935 I think. It was *Scipione L'Africano* by Carmine Gallone and it was one of the biggest productions during the fascist time here in Italy. After this picture, I played in several other films such as *La Forza Bruta* by Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia and *Soltanto Un Bacio* by

Giorgio Simonelli for example. I did my last film as an actor in 1940 -under the direction of Amleto Palermi. *L'Elisir D'Amore* is also the first film where I got a credit for the role I played. Once and awhile they show one of those old movies on TV and it is really a funny and strange thing for my family to see me acting in those pictures (laughs). During my time as a student I returned to the movie-industry and worked as an assistant to the famous editor Otello Colangeli, who became my teacher for years. Slowly I was climbing up the ladder. I became editor, then assistant dubbing director, dubbing director and after a long time finally a director. I was about 20 years old when I shot my very first film, a documentary called *Maghi E Medicine* followed by several others such as *Strumenti A Corda Nel Tempo*, *Turismo Col Police* and

Intervista Al Cervello. Together with my friend Sergio Sollima, I directed the documentaries *Eroi Del Cinema*, *La Donna E Lo Sport*, *Ragazze Di Copertina* and *Immagini Del Suono*. During this period of my life I also began working as an assistant director for such famous directors as Mario Costa, Camillo Mastrocinque, Mario Bonnard, Luigi Filippo D'Amico and Anton Giulio Majano only to mention a few. From 1956 on I was involved in the dubbing-process of many many movies from big directors such as Franco Rossi and Damiano Damiani. I was also the dubbing-director for Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. It was just a matter of time until I finally got the chance to direct a big picture by myself and it happened in 1961 when I shot *Il Gladiatore Invincibile*.

ETC- You mentioned so many big directors you have worked with. Who do you think influenced your work and your style in the most significant way?

I always tried to pick up the best points from every one. Some directors were very good on the technical aspect, others are brilliant in terms of acting. I love Giorgio Simonelli very very much, unfortunately he is not very well known. He had a marvelous talent of making working with him easy and nice for everybody involved. That is a quality which counts for more than people usually might think. I also learned a lot from Fellini. He was amazing in improvising on the set and had an exceptional visual talent to make simple, unimportant seeming details into something meaningful. I learned from him to take good care of those details and to realize little things can change the whole atmosphere of a film and add a certain kind of "flavor" to it. Fellini taught me how to use my eyes, how to watch things, people, faces, etc. I was also a good friend of Sergio Leone. I was second-assistent director on *Duck You Sucker*. Antonio Margheriti did the Special-Effects for the film. There is a wonderful story I have to tell

you. I am a Jazz-pianist and during my time at the University I played with Antonio and Lucio Fulci sometimes. I would love to form a group with Margheriti on the drums, Fulci on the trumpet and me at the piano. I think this would be an amazing trio and I hope to be able to realize this crazy dream for a TV-show or something similar in the future! Mario Bava was also a quite close friend of mine. He had the same qualities as Simonelli. Working with him was always a pleasure and an easy job with no problems at all. I think I worked with him when I was still an assistant-director and Mario was a cameraman. I can't remember exactly. Unfortunately, I never ever got to know Riccardo Freda. I only saw him when I was a little boy and was certainly very much impressed. My father worked once with him in Brazil on a movie called *Guarany*.

ETC- In your early days as a director you shot quite a large number of peplum-movies such as Il Gladiatore Invincibile, Due Contro Tutti and Perseo L'Invincibile. Wasn't it hard for a young director to work on such large productions with so many extras, etc?

Not really, if you know how to do the job. It might be a very big problem for young directors nowadays because they have no experience in doing such a film. I worked as an assistant on at least ten movies of that type, so I knew from the beginning what problems could occur and what I had to do to solve them. It is hard work but not really difficult. You just have to invest a lot of time to get everything right on the set.

ETC- On 100 000 Dollari Per Ringo you worked with Fernando Sancho who was a busy actor at that time.

He was very nice and friendly. You're right, he was very very busy at that time. I had to fight to get him for this production because he was involved in so many other projects. One

day while we were shooting, the producer came to me and said "Listen Alberto, Fernando is not able to come anymore because he is involved in two other films at the moment. We have to get another actor to finish the film." I told him he could also hire another director because if Fernando wasn't coming back, neither would I. Fortunately, Fernando had mercy on us and came back so we could finish the film. Incredible, isn't it? Today it is impossible to say something like this to a producer. Before you would even finish the sentence you would get fired. The whole relationship between producer and director changed 100 percent in the last few years. At the time when I was working, I directed, supervised the editing and also directed the dubbing. I really made "Alberto De Martino" movies and I made them exactly the way I wanted them to be done. I took advice from no one. Today you are only a replaceable puppet. Also if you work for TV you have to be so fast, you just don't have the time to care about anything else but directing. The director is no longer the real creative person in a production. There are only a few filmmakers left who still have such status and are really able to do on the set and afterwards in the editing-room whatever they want. Most of them have their own production-companies and so they are their own boss, like Massaccesi for example. He has done erotic films for years now but he shoots them mainly for the foreign markets since none of these films are shown in cinemas here in Italy.

ETC- Enzo Castellari was your assistant-director on some of your early films.

Yes, he worked on four movies with me. I think they were 100 000 Dollari Per Ringo Upperseven L'Uomo Da Uccidere, Missione Speciale Lady Chaplin and Django Spara Per Primo. I think he turned into a really brilliant director who knows his job extremely well. I helped him at that time to be able to direct his first film in the late sixties. The young

directors today are not really good because they have no experience. They never work as assistant-directors because there are simply no more productions left for them to work on.

ETC - On Roma Come Chicago you worked with John Cassavetes. It is said he was not a very easy actor to work with.

I think he was a big big talent, maybe even more as a writer/director. I remember he had a very strange way of acting at that time. Cassavetes was really able to become a different personality in front of the camera whenever he put a certain kind of erotic, sleazy touch into a scene. He always made the impression on me of a tortured, haunted person. When he was just acting "normal" it seemed he didn't exist on the screen, his presence was gone and so he tried to find a reason for every situation in the film to get into that mood, but this was certainly not always possible. This caused some problems during shooting. We worked together for six weeks. The first 14 days we were really good friends but after the third week we quarrelled once and awhile so we finished the film between the greatest friendship and a lot of troubles. I also think John had some trouble with drugs at that time. After Roma... he did a film with director Giuliano Montaldo (Machine Gun McCain). Giuliano came to me and said "But Alberto, how did you manage to work with him, he is so difficult to handle and so many problems show up". I answered it would probably depend on what sort of "medicine" he enjoyed the day before (Giuliano didn't understand what I meant so he was quite astonished and said "Oh really, my god, the poor poor man" (laughs loud)). Cassavetes was quite angry at Giuliano I think. I remember the final scene was supposed to be a long close-up shot of John dying but he just quit the job and left Italy on the next plane. Poor Giuliano had a lot of problems in changing the ending so quick and logically. But what can I say, John was really

a genius and whenever you work with the genius type of actor you will always have some problems and difficulties!

ETC- L'Uomo Dagli Occhi Di Ghiaccio (The Man With The Icy Eyes) was your first Giallo film.

You're right. You can also count *Roma Come Chicago* and *Femmine Insaziabili* but I think they're not really giallos in the usual sense. We shot the whole film in New Mexico and I had some wonderful actors for the film, among them Victor Buono, Barbara Bouchet and Antonio Sabato.

ETC- Where do you think the typical erotic touch in the Italian thriller movies comes from?

I don't know for sure. Mario Bava had a lot of those S/M motives in his movies but I don't think you can find them in mine. I am a more open, uncomplicated person. Bava was a movie genius but I wouldn't consider him as an intellectual. Don't misunderstand me, I don't mean this in a negative sense. He was a very shy person so all the visions and ideas you can find in his movies came from inside Bava and not really from his surroundings. With me it's different. My *L'Anticristo* is a film about sexual frustration that turns into possession. It is a difficult theme to talk about. Italy is still a very conservative country and movies or art in general are certainly an attempt to fight against this so called morality.

ETC- That is one reason why I love Italian movies so much. They always try to combine the typical exploitation and B-movie stories with a certain kind of artistic-touch.

Sure, that's because the directors have to consider their films as A-movies. You have to invest all your energy in the making of such a film and so you certainly try to create something special, try to give something from yourself to the picture. Since we don't have

big budgets we have to use our imagination to create something interesting for the audience.

ETC- L'Assassino E Al Telefono (Scenes From A Murder 1972) is a film with a lot of ideas.

I really love this film. Telly Savalas has a big part and he was a wonderful person and a very natural actor. He had a lot of experience, not only in acting but also in life. I tried to tell a very strange, almost paranoid story and it turned into a cult-movie in the last few years since they show it again and again on TV.



ETC- On Il Consigliori (The Counselor) you worked with one of my favorite Italian actors...

You are talking about Tomas Milian, aren't you? I think *Il Consigliori* is one of the last pictures where he looks good. After this film he played a lot of strange roles under tons of make-up. I remember him in one role where he played a criminal hunchback and he was fantastic (Umberto Lenzi's *The Tough Ones*). Milian is an exceptionally talented man and a very interesting character. He is living in

Miami now and plays once and awhile in some strange American films. I had no problems working with him but usually I never have problems with actors on the set. Certainly as I told you before I had some discussions with Cassavetes but this is movie-work and it is necessary to exchange different opinions. Also, I like to give my actors some space and hope they are able to develop the characters in a good way.

ETC - I really love L'Antichristo. There are several people including me who think your film is better than the original Exorcist.

Yes, I spoke with some Spanish journalists after a screening and they had the same opinion. It is a film with a quite simple, believable story but with a strong visual and progressive impact. I think I know the reason why mainly European people prefer L'Antichristo to The Exorcist. I saw Friedkin's film in New York when it opened and the American audience was really scared and impressed. A few months later I saw the film here in Rome and the people were laughing during several scenes. At a screening of L'Antichristo here in Rome I watched the audience again and nobody was laughing. Both films deal with the same theme but with a different religious background and a different cultural point of view. The Exorcist is by far a more scientific, modern film while L'Antichristo is poetic, based on very old traditional catholic metaphors. At that time the audience was also more conservative and religious than today. The people saw things and rituals in my film they knew from their day-to-day lives and they believed in them. They saw the church St. Peter and the whole surrounding of Rome. It was just a closer vision to their religious standpoint than The Exorcist. I am quite sure many American people were laughing at L'Antichristo. I tried to put a lot of Italian religious culture and sensibility into the film and I think I succeeded. I like the movie a lot and also tried

to keep its atmosphere for the foreign markets intact. I directed the English language dubbing for the picture in New York and checked the German and the French versions.

ETC- I suppose you had some censorship problems with L'Antichristo, for example during the Sabbath-scene.

No, not at all but we had a lot of trouble with Warner Bros. in the United States. Fortunately we won the trial. They said at that time our film was a rip-off but this is really not true. It is a different story and a completely different atmosphere.

ETC- Aristide Massaccesi (aka Joe D'Amato) was your cameraman for the film.

Yes, and he is truly an amazing cameraman. It is sad he went into a very strange direction as a filmmaker because he is so talented and could do so much more. I suppose it is all just business for him right now. He was similar to Castellari. They both have the sensibility you need to make good movies and they also had an unbelievable technical knowledge. Enzo chose the better projects as a director while Aristide is no longer interested in any ideals, he is just serving the market.

ETC- Were the visual FX in L'Antichristo your idea or Massaccesi's?

They were mine, I took all ideas for the film out of an old German book about such things. I made a list and asked Aristide later on what we could reproduce in a realistic way.

ETC- Bruno Nicolai and Ennio Morricone wrote an amazing score for the film. You worked quite often with both.

That's true. Unfortunately at the time when L'Antichristo opened in Italy the critics never really appreciated the work both musicians

did for my film. We hired a famous violin player named Tamponi to play the music for the film. He was the best in his profession at the time. Nicolai and Morricone wrote some extremely difficult musical parts for the violin and even for Tamponi it was quite hard to play them well. We recorded 23 to 25 different music phrases and finally mixed them all together, concentrating for each special scene on a special frame. It was really an avant-garde piece of music and very unusual for a soundtrack here in Italy. Nicolai wrote all the notes for the organ because he was originally an organ player.

ETC- L'Uomo Puma (Panther Man) is a comicbook-inspired picture which reminded me a lot of Superargo and similar superhero films from the sixties and seventies.

Indeed and it was also a great flop at the box office. I was also co-producer. The only big flop in my career and I was the co-producer (laughs). The problem you have to understand is the film is not a serious comic-film. We did it at the very end of the big motion-picture period here, in Italy. It was the first big flop and after this one many many others followed. Fortunately it was sold all over the world - so I didn't lose any money which seems almost like a miracle to me if I take a look at the box office receipts today (laughs). Donald Pleasance was a very nice man with an interesting background. He was also a very funny character. You know he played in absolutely everything, the worst movies (Donald Pleasance died earlier this year). I think British actors are probably the best actors in the whole world. They know their job very well but they always put a certain kind of humor and personal style in their work. They just don't take everything too seriously and that is a really fantastic thing. Before L'Uomo Puma he worked only a few times here in Italy but after my film he spent most of his time in Rome I think (laughs).

ETC- Extrasensorial (Blood Link) is a very atypical film compared to your other work.

Yes, I like the film very much. Unfortunately I had to change the ending. I had a different idea for the finish but the scriptwriter was an American guy so he changed the ending for the US-market. I had the following end in mind: We have those two twins and one is able to see through the eyes of the other one. At the end one dies and the other one sees some sort of a beyond. I didn't want to show a real beyond or something like that but just the expression of fear and horror on the face of the living twin. I loved this idea a lot. Unfortunately the Americans were not so fond of it so it had to be changed.



ETC- What is your favorite film among the ones you directed?

I really love Holocaust 2000. It is a very interesting film with a very good story. Certainly it is influenced by The Omen but all my films are based in one way or the other on an American production. I love Kirk Douglas a lot and we had a wonderful relationship during shooting. On the promotional tour for the film Kirk told journalists I was the best director he had ever worked with. The guys were furious and couldn't believe his words. I

mean, they had never even heard of me before (laughs). It was very strange for me to work with Kirk because every time I talked things over with him, we discovered we had the same points of view and the same taste, we liked the same movies, the same music and literature and such stuff. Kirk was born in Russia and raised in America, I was born and raised in Rome so I was wondering why we had so much in common. Our cultural background was so different. There was really something like an unexplainable bond between us. By the way, one thing you should never ever do when you work with him is to interrupt during a scene. It's like waking up a sleepwalker or a guy under hypnosis.

ETC- Since you worked in almost every genre, is there a special one which you prefer?

Well, I like very much the action-genre. I shot westerns, peplum, action and also horror. There is actually no special type of genre which I like more than others. It always depends on the story I have to tell. If it is a good and fascinating one I don't care about genres at all.

ETC- You haven't directed for a quite long time. What are you doing right now?

I am afraid to say so but I decided some time ago to direct no more movies unless the production circumstances in Italy change 100 percent. Right now I am doing several dubbing jobs for TV series like "Dallas" or "Kojak". I also write scripts once and awhile. *7 Hyden Park (Formula For A Murder)* and *Miami Golem* were my last movies and both turned out to be not exactly what I had in my mind. I liked the scripts and the producer said "O.K., let's do it but you have only 18 days for shooting". It was more or less only to prove to me if I could really make a film in such a short time. David Warbeck (who starred in both films) is a wonderful guy. He looks a little bit like Jack Nicholson and I

think this is the main reason why he was cast for that type of film (laughs).

ETC- What is your explanation for the very bad situation of the film-market at the moment, especially for Italian productions?

I think the key to this question is the audience. We still have talented writers, directors and cameramen. The problem is they are showing about 5000 movies on TV each year and there is also video. The people are able to see movies and images each day, again and again, whenever they push the button. There is no longer something special in seeing a film as it was here in Italy 15 years ago. The audience is no longer really willing to follow those images. If they don't understand or like a program they just switch the channel. The movies have lost their mass-appeal and maybe the writers and directors feel this and so it is also reflected in their work. When I had an idea for a film 10 years ago and wanted to talk with my friends about it, I called a dozen people to raise some money and to exchange opinions on this idea. Whenever I have such an idea today I just think, "Forget it as soon as possible, it is just a waste of energy to dream about it". The Italian motion picture industry is completely dead right now and I don't believe better times will come some day. Decades ago when we shot those peplums it was quite easy and cheap to make a project come true. Today you can only work for TV or, if you are one of the "lucky" ones, make a film with a famous Italian comedian who is still able to realize one or two productions each year. It seems almost like a bad joke when we speak nowadays about our "movie industry". Such a thing no longer exists and the people who lived from and for this business are long gone. If you try to raise money for a film you don't go to professional producers anymore, you have to crawl to politicians and bureaucrats. Then they send you to another guy in a dusty office, then to another. At the end stands a political party and in case

you have a different political opinion, don't fit into their image or just have a nose those guys don't like you can forget seeing one Lira to direct a film. It is like a big spider-web. I have never ever been member of a political party and I am proud of this, especially if you know a little bit how politics in this country really works. Our audience never really believed in the quality of our productions so we had to hide behind pseudonyms. Even Sergio Leone was forced to direct his first Western under a different name. I had to choose Martin Herbert for *Horror* (aka *Horror Of The Blancheville Monster*) because the producer wanted to give the impression of an American production. I used this name also for several other pictures I did afterwards. If I take a look at the number of cinemas that still exist today I really feel sad. At the moment we have about 2000 all over Italy, ten years ago we had over 5000. Today, cinemas remind me much more of a big holiday park than a place where you can go to see a movie. You go there with your whole family to get an impression of the latest cinema-technique from the USA, not really an impression of the film. All this only to better hear and see how someone blows up 100 cars in a minute (laughs). The people forgot how to enjoy silent, psychological details in a film. That is also the reason why I invented a TV-game-show called "Slapstick" some time ago. It is my revenge on television here in Italy. Whenever you are switching from one channel to the other one and you discover a face you can't stand seeing, just shoot it with the Slapstick-gun and the impression of this face will disappear from the screen for a few moments, replaced by a white mark. I presented it at the toy market in Milan and it was a big success. I hope it will be in the stores in a few month all over Italy.

ETC- So there are actually no movie-projects you are working on right now?

I am certainly still interested in this work. I

have a contract with "Filmwest". For almost two years now nothing has happened. I was supposed to shoot two action-pictures about the Dakar-Rally. Right after *Holocaust 2000* I had a wonderful project I wanted to realize with producer Edmondo Amati. It was called *Comeback to Atlantis*. We had a very nice script but Amati cancelled it because at that time the crisis in the industry was already happening and everybody was afraid to risk any money. It was a project about UFOs and soon after, Steven Spielberg made *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* which was a story quite similar to the one I had in mind. It was maybe the most original script I ever had but unfortunately the budget would have been far too high for European producers. I also have another dream project. It is a story I've wanted to make for years now and it takes place in the very near future, maybe in six or seven years from now. It is not really Science Fiction but almost. I wanted to show how the Mafia could be destroyed all over the world, with a strategy on how to fight organized crime. The world governments decide those crime-organizations are far too large and powerful so they have to be reduced to a "healthy" size. It is quite difficult to describe the story but believe me, it is a marvelous plot. I also plan to make a film about the "Slapstick" game-set in the future. I really can't complain since I can get along well with the job I am doing right now for TV. We will see what the future brings!



Interview conducted by Peter Blumenstock and Christian Kessler 1994

Special thanks to Loris Curci, without his help this interview might have never happened!

HITCH HIKE (1977)

REVIEWED BY KEVIN GRANT

This decadent thriller from an unexpected and little known director, is tight and tense, with a sustained air of sexual menace magnified by riveting performances. It's starkly shot, compelling stuff, and puts all those glossy yuppie nightmares churned out by Hollywood in recent years to shame. Pasquale Festa Campanile (who I had never encountered before this) has created an assured, trashy treat, a kind of **PACIFIC HEIGHTS** on the highway, with a far nastier atmosphere and not even the hint of a happy ending.

Franco Nero and Corinne Clery play reporter Walter Mancini and his wife Eve, a far from happy Italian couple winding up their vacation in the American wilderness. An indication of their relationship is given at the opening, with Walter not so playfully training his hunting rifle on his wife before haggling a deer. He is a boozy, hitter hack (similar to Nero's character in Luigi Bazzone's giallo **THE FIFTH CORD** (1971)), and the flame of their marriage has clearly been dying a good while. Even the decision to pick up a hitch-hiker is disputed. Walter is dead-set against the idea - he must have seen **LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT**, for the thumb tripper is none other than David Hess, in another of his superlative scumbag roles.

Straight away, he starts to antagonize Walter and sloshes all over Eve. Soon the radio reports a holdup nearby in which a cop was killed and the Mancini's find themselves the captives of a psycho, who exploits the sexual tension and jealousy between them. From here the film is a battle of wills, as Walter and Eve try to pull together long enough to survive the attentions of the man who, in other outings, hooked his own son on heroin (**LAST HOUSE**) and tortured a sweet young girl with a straight razor (**HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THE PARK**). This guy must

have no trouble getting served in bars. Along the way, he thinks nothing of wasting a pair of prying policemen, and two ex-partners who turn up looking for the loot. But wait, this is a son-of-a-hitch with a purpose - he makes Walter a proposal, to write a book about the kidnapping that will make them both a fortune. "I'm your scoop!", he mocks, and screws Eve before Walter's eyes - "For the book, Walter, I need sex!" Hey, he may be fucked up in the sanity department, but he gets to slip it to Corinne Clery, all for the sake of artistic integrity!

The claustrophobic story requires strong performances to work, and the deadly chemistry between the principals is so explosive it threatens to engulf them at any moment. Nero gives another of his ball-breaking displays, and whenever he's in this irascible mood, you just know a good shit kicking isn't far away. Even though Walter is a jerk, it's hard not to feel his anguish as Hess paws his wife at regular intervals. Luscious Corinne Clery is as watchable as ever, and Campanile offers ample opportunities for her co-stars to fondle, and male viewers to ogle, her sumptuous body. She's probably best known for **THE STORY OF O**, but can also be seen in Paolo Cavara's thriller **E TANTA PAURA/TOO MUCH FEAR** (1976) and Aldo Lado's sci-fi rumble **THE HUMANOID** (1979). Not for the first time, however, it's Hess who walks off with the show as the insecure psycho, who takes offense at having his nastiness underestimated, and gives Walter a beating when the latter suggests he's nothing without a gun - that'll teach him to lapse into phallic Freudianisms. Bearing all this in mind, the twist when it comes is hardly a shock. Hess it turns out, is one of three who escaped from an asylum, and takes his incarcerated dementia out on the first tenuous married couple he comes across. This sets a pattern that the likes of **PACIFIC HEIGHTS** and Scorsese's **CAPE FEAR** have milked to huge commercial advantage, with a deranged intruder infecting a central relationship primed to self-destruct,

but with the kind of cop out conclusion scrupulously avoided by Campanile. I'll not spoil the fun here, but suffice to say that the final 20 minutes, in which the previously watertight script threatens to wander endlessly, has a gratifyingly grim outcome.

While strong on performances, the film's no slouch on the technical side. Ennio Morricone does it again with the score, an understated banjo and guitar based composition that cleverly ups the tension. The only drawback is an irritating hippie jingle, intended for ironic effect but before long (like a similar ditty in Lamberto Bava's **BLASTFIGHTER**) it only succeeds in pissing you off. Despite having little more than the inside of a car to work with for much of the time, cameramen Franco Di Giacomo and Giuseppe Ruzzolini manage to capture the isolation of the open road, and Campanile occasionally lets rip with violent outbursts, perfectly timed for maximum shock effect. Which is somewhat surprising. Who the hell is this Campanile guy anyway? His other credits seem to consist solely of lame sex comedies like the sci-fi farce **THE SEX MACHINE** (1975) and **BINGO BONGO** (1982). I'd certainly steer clear of anything with a title like **BINGO** fucking **BONGO**, but Campanile shows a deft hand here, juggling the exploitation elements in confident style. It would take a cynic to suggest that only a dick could make a bad film with Nero, Clery and Hess (maybe they're right - I keep thinking about **BINGO BONGO**), but this is as compact a thriller as you're likely to see. Campanile can also presumably take credit for the spicy sexual frissons in the script, which he penned with Ottavio Jemma and Aldo Crudo, and the bitter climax which may not be crowd pleasing, but puts an interesting twist on the crime doesn't pay cliché.

Kevin Grant has written for Giallo Pages and will be back in the pages of ETC soon.

LINER NOTES BY DOUGLAS E. WINTER: SIMON BOSWELL'S DELIRIA

Like most filmgoers, my first encounter with the music of Simon Boswell came upon hearing the plaintive echoes of his "Maggots" theme and the gothic ravings of Andi Sex Gang in Dario Argento's **PHENOMENA** (1985). With his synth-driven main title for **DEMONS 2** (1986), there was no doubt that he was an artist of note, the heir apparent to Tangerine Dream and Goblin: a composer who could capably adapt the rock idiom as film music instead of mere filler. Yet Boswell's style was fresh and unique, merging classical minimalism with rock-and-roll sensibilities, creating electronic and ambient soundscapes presided over by the fearsome drone of synths, samples and the thunderous percussion that would often serve as his trademark.

Born in London in 1956, Boswell recorded a solo album while studying at Cambridge University and later played with the bands Live Wire and Advertising. During the 1980s, he came into his own as a producer of such diverse performers as 23 Skidoo, Pierce Turner, Amii Stewart and Nik Kershaw. Following his early film compositions for Argento -- which also included a cue for **OPERA** (1987) -- Boswell was called upon to score numerous Italian horror projects, principally for Argento understudies Michele Soavi and Lamberto Bava. His talents as composer and performer soon graced Alejandro Jodorowsky's **SANTA SANGRE** (1989) and Richard Stanley's **HARDWARE** (1990) and **DUST DEVIL** (1993).

The 1987 motion picture **DELIRIA** (a.k.a. **AQUARIUS**, **STAGEFRIGHT** and **BLOODY BIRD**) was a remarkable debut: the first feature film directed by Michele Soavi and the first complete score recorded by Simon Boswell. Working with a minimal

budget, Soavi and his screenwriter, Luigi Montefiori (better known by his stage name, George Eastman), devised the story of a horrific musical about murder whose actors find themselves stalked by a real-life murderer. This retelling of **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** by way of **HALLOWEEN** produced a clever, claustrophobic nightmare – and that rarity of rarities, an intelligent slasher film graced with irony and scares that actually work. The film was awarded the *Grand Prix de la Peur* at the 1987 Avoriaz Film Festival and launched Soavi's brilliant career as director of the more substantially budgeted **LA CHIESA (THE CHURCH, 1989)**, **LA SETTA (THE SECT, 1991)** and, most recently, **DELLAMORE DELLAMORTE (1994)**.

THE KILLER FROM STAGEFRIGHT



The curious structure of **DELIRIA** demanded that Simon Boswell write his score around a rock musical in rehearsal – an eighties version of “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue” whose major cues, written by Stefano Mainetti, are also included on this compact disc. Although Mainetti's opening dance theme serves as the main title, its upbeat hyperbole soon fades into Boswell's gloomy atmospherics, which circle nervously around the film's signature cue, the baleful synthesizer lead of “Locked Up,” whose dark, haunting tones cast precisely the right shadows across Soavi's stage.

The soundtrack of **DELIRIA** was the foundation for even more compelling compositions that would follow; as a result, it represents a milestone in the rich tradition of rock idiom in European horror film scores. This premiere release of the early film music of Simon Boswell is a welcome – and eminently listenable – addition to the collection of any enthusiast of film music or the horror film.

THE PERFUME OF A WOMAN IN BLACK(1974) DIRECTED BY FRANCESCO BARILLI REVIEWED BY BRIAN PUTERMAN

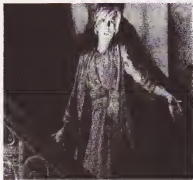
The opening credits roll. Nicola Piovane's score plays a haunting child-like melody heard throughout the film. A color-enhanced black and white photo of a man, woman and little girl are seen. We are taken into a long sweeping shot that begins on toy ships in the pale blue water of a fountain over children playing in a court yard. The camera pans up the front of an old apartment building following an elderly woman as she attends her flowers, finally settling on the beautiful Minsy Farmer waving out her

window. When you see Director of Photography Mario Masini's sensual cinematography in this opening shot and Francesco Barilli's dreamlike direction, you immediately know this is no ordinary horror flick. Rest assured you are in for a cinematic delight. CAUTION: Watching this film may cause you to think!

The story is centered around Silvia Hackerman, played by horror veteran Mimsy Farmer, who puts in her best performance since **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET** (1972). It seems that as a child, Silvia pushed her mother to her death off the balcony of their home - an act she claims not to remember. The reasons for this aren't quite clear. Although it is suggested in a series of hallucinations that seeing her mother in bed with the local pet shop owner, who may have molested poor little Silvia while her dad was off at sea, might have something to do with it. Either way she isn't too fond of him as we see in one of her more vivid hallucinations - when she stabs him in the face with a pair of scissors. Later on in the film this very same man shows up (in the present) in a taxidermy shop - and in a possibly imagined rape scene, when Silvia returns in a psychotic state to her abandoned childhood home. The reason I say possibly is that we are almost never quite sure if these things are hallucinations or some kind of conspiracy or, even revenge for killing her mother by her mother's lover. Oh, did I mention there are several subplots involving the neighbors and her boyfriend Roberto? Early on in the film, Silvia and Roberto attend a gathering of his friends. Andy, a university professor from Africa, talks about witchcraft and the occult, hinting at things to come. The next day while playing tennis with Andy, Silvia picks up her racket only to be struck with a ball that had somehow been imbedded in the handle. Andy, being a helpful guy, takes her bleeding hand and says, "I know what to do" then proceeds to suck on the wound much to

Silvia's dismay. She hallucinates a little girl dancing in a field near by. This is just the beginning of many bizarre events in Silvia's life. As the hallucinations of her mother become more vivid and her behavior more unpredictable, she is visited by a little blonde girl in a white dress who violently refuses to leave her apartment. Did I mention that the photo in the beginning was of a little girl in a white dress and that Silvia almost always wears white during the film? The exception being when she puts on her mothers black dress and goes ballistic near the end. Anyway, this little girl turns out to be Silvia herself as a child. The little girl seems to drift in and out of her apartment until finally she appears with a box of four identical white dresses and a neighbor's dead cat as a gift. (The pet shop owner gave Silvia a cat as a child.). The little bitch is moving in permanently, so Silvia decides to stuff the cat as a pet for the kid.

During all of this - her boyfriend Roberto's, as well as her neighbor's behavior become increasingly strange. They all seem to know what's really going on, or is that just Silvia's paranoia? Perhaps the fact they have a late night gathering each evening in some sort of abandoned building, wearing identical grey trench-coats is a clue. Not to mention Signor Rosetti, her neighbor across the hall, who turns up in places when you would least expect it, i.e. the zoo. He's also spotted by Silvia dragging a heavy box into his apartment one night looking very suspicious. Plus he feeds his cat human remains. Shades of Roman Polanski's **THE TENANT** (1976). Roman, you old copy cat! Towards the end Silvia seems to go on a killing spree with a meat cleaver and gathers her deceased victims for an "Alice-in-Wonderland" inspired tea party. She even invites Roberto for a little meat-cleaver-in-the-back fun. I don't want to reveal the ending for reasons you will understand upon viewing.



*Minsy Farmer descends into the bowels of Hell from **THE PERFUME OF A LADY IN BLACK**.*

This film is jam-packed with so many compelling images, multiple viewings are recommended. The soundtrack is effective and never overbearing with a good mix of exaggerated ambient sounds to create a wonderful surreal atmosphere. Dona Jordan puts in a nice performance as Francesca the voyeuristic, sexy neighbor. Francesco Barilli's stylish use of color and symbolism is sheer visual poetry. The ending of the film is as powerful and disturbing as anything I have ever seen. It's definitely a mind-blower. You will walk away from this film wanting a second helping. **THE PERFUME OF A WOMAN IN BLACK** is the reason I watch movies.

*Brian Puterman has worked extensively in music production and TV. He is currently toiling on **NORTHERN EXPOSURE**.*

THE DEMONS (1972) **REVIEWED BY WILLIAM BURNS**

Anyone who takes even a minute interest in the wide array of genres within the European trash canon must be aware of the "Nuns go nuts" style of film. From Ken Russell's **THE DEVILS** to Domenico Paolella's **THE NUNS OF SANT'ARCHANGELO** to Walerian Borowczyk's **BEHIND THE CONVENT WALLS**, the unifying characteristics of the "Nuns go nuts" films are lesbianism, sadomasochistic violence, blasphemic activities and deranged behavior. Jess Franco's **THE DEMONS** certainly can be placed in this style of film, yet like any other Franco genre entry it is curiously out of step with others of its type. Franco liberally sprinkles witchcraft, Satanism, court power relations and world politics into an already idiosyncratic study of the repression, lusts and liberation of the holy sisters of Blackmoor convent.

THE DEMONS begins with a witch examination conducted by Lord Justice Jeffries, who condemns the woman to death. As she burns at the stake, she curses Jeffries and his two agents Renfield and Lady de Winter, promising revenge through her two daughters. The sisters (Kathleen and Margaret) are nuns in the Blackmoor convent. Kathleen is plagued by sensual dreams and after witnessing Kathleen's ecstatic shagging, Mother Superior Rosalind is compelled to masturbate. Renfield and Lady de Winter are searching for the witch's daughters and ask to see the sisters. The girls are submitted to a humiliating virgin test and Kathleen is accused of witchcraft. She is tortured but doesn't confess. Renfield, feeling equal pangs of love and conscience, frees Kathleen, who escapes to safety at an artist's home. An apparition of the executed witch appears to Margaret, demanding she take

vengeance on the three murderers and revealing that Lord de Winter is the girl's father. Margaret has sex with Satan and in turn she seduces the Mother Superior, who commits suicide. The changed sister leaves the convent and meets Karen, a blind witch, in the forest. Karen shows Margaret how to get revenge. Angry over Kathleen's escape, Lord Jeffries threatens Renfield with death if he doesn't retrieve her. Renfield finds Kathleen but kills the Lord's men, planning to take Kathleen to Holland. Jeffries' troops recapture Renfield and Kathleen, torturing Renfield and making Kathleen submit to Jeffries' sexual whims. The prisoners are taken to the de Winter castle, which Margaret has infiltrated incognito. Using the "kiss of death" during oral sex (shades of **THE BARE BREASTED COUNTESS**), Margaret turns Lady de Winter into a skeleton. Lord de Winter, secretly helping the planned invasion by William of Orange, discovers the truth about the girls' parentage and frees Renfield and Kathleen. A fight ensues with Jeffries' men leaving Lord de Winter dead. Kathleen, Renfield and Margaret hide out in a barn where Margaret gives Renfield her special kiss. Shocked and horrified that her lover is dead, Kathleen alerts the townspeople that her sister is a witch. Imprisoned, tried and sentenced to the stake, Margaret asks Jeffries for a final kiss, turning the Inquisitor into a skeleton. As Margaret burns, Kathleen meets Karen and takes her hand.

THE DEMONS is one of Franco's most exciting films. Not content to dwell on sacrilegious depravity and raunchy sex scenes, Franco infuses intrigue and adventure into an already unorthodox category of film. Franco is one of the few masters of creating and sustaining moods: a sleazy ambience of corruption, vulgarity and world weariness. In **THE DEMONS**, sexual repression comes out through sadism, erotic dreams and secret, forbidden acts. Faith, rapture and punishment are all equated in a

world governed by religious inhibition, a strict male hierarchy and viscous intellectual suppression.

The focus of the film is female sexuality, as women in the film are both objects of desire and repulsion, to be made love to and to be barbarically beaten and restrained. Margaret is liberated after having intercourse (actually it is a rape) while Kathleen must use her body to survive in a cruel, male dominated world. Some people are too pent up as Mother Rosalind leaps to her death after her tryst with Margaret. Yet to see women who are supposed to hate their bodies and any sort of pleasure writhing around in delirious bliss is extremely satisfying (Here, Franco is the exhibitionist's best friend, immediately zooming into all anatomical points of interest).

The most interesting character in **THE DEMONS** is Lady de Winter, who is often portrayed in very masculine ways. She has an unusually powerful position as Jeffries' agent, using the post to fulfill her own deviant cravings (much like Renfield and Jeffries do). The Lady's eyes glaze over as she caresses the girls' behinds (later she identifies Margaret by the feel of her rear end!), she oversees the searing of Kathleen's nipples and asks Margaret if she ever made love to a woman. Lady de Winter is a woman of high breeding and intelligence but she wallows in debauchery just as well as the big boys ("Sometimes the righteous are wicked.", indeed). Women are revealed as the real power wielders in the final two scenes. Margaret is continuing in the cycle of brutality that has claimed her mother and abused her sister, initiated by Jeffries' witch test. Jeffries is drunk on his own authority, believing that he is on the same level of judgement as God. As a fierce yet benevolent (as well as lecherous) deity, Jeffries grants Margaret her last wish in the penultimate sequence, leading to his doom (Franco fashions a frightening image of the burning witch embraced by Jeffries' bones).

Margaret is a double edged sword: her beauty attracts the Inquistor and her kiss brings expiration. The last shot of the film is of Kathleen joining hands with Karen, showing that the legacy of feminine energy and strength will continue.

In the final analysis, **THE DEMONS** is only marred by its ridiculous musical score. The film's setting is in the medieval age but blaring on the soundtrack are squawking flutes, bongos, a thumping bass, squalling guitar solos and wah-wah breaks. Despite this one quibble, (bless his spastic camera), **THE DEMONS** turns out to be one of Jess Franco's most cohesive and enlightening works.

(Thanks to Fred Frey for the term "Nuns go Nuts")

MIL SEXOS TIENE LA NOCHE (1982)

REVIEWED BY ROBERT MONELL

This obscure 1982 title was lensed on the same Canary Island locations which would become an overfamiliarily backdrop for many of Jess Franco's 1980's erotic thrillers. This is, nonetheless, one of Franco's most impressive visual achievements. What little plot there is in this stylistic exercise is simply recycled material from **THE DIABOLICAL DR. Z** (1965) and **SUCCUBUS** (1967), two of Franco's signature films from his pre-XXX days. As in those 60s classics, erotic imagery, sexual violence and trances lend **MIL SEXOS TIENE LA NOCHE** (1982) a gorgeous delirium which allow it to transcend Franco's mercurial early eighties-exotic period.

As if in desperation Franco once again returns us to the situational horror of a night club entertainer (Lina Romay) who falls

under the hypnotic spell of a ruthless individual who uses her as an agent of death. The villains here--Fabian (Daniel Katz) and Lorna (Alicia Principe)--are after some jet setters who use the tropical hotel setting as a place to hang out, do drugs, and engage in casual sex (of the soft core variety this time around). The exact nature of the grudge is obscured by the untranslated Spanish dialogue, but the familiar plot elements take a back seat to the overwhelmingly onerous atmosphere. This mood is maintained through above-average performances (for a Franco film), Daniel White's neo-primitive score, and the painterly color compositions of Juan Soler Cozar, who employs hallucinatory tints and artfully titled set-ups. Even Franco's usual cameo, as Lina's psychiatrist, is unusually well-knit into the narrative and provides for a genuinely startling finale which puts a sudden prosaic spin on the otherwise dreamlike proceedings.

Lina Romay takes a welcome break from her "Candy Coster" persona--in which she dyes her hair blonde, gains many pounds and jiggles around in ultra-tight swimwear. When she assumes this rather grotesque alter-ego, Romay seems to abandon her considerable acting skill and opts for a rather coarse sexual slapstick. These tiresome antics seriously flawed several of Franco's more intriguing Golden Films productions, especially **MANSION DE LOS MUERTOS VIVIENTES** (1982). Luckily, Franco wised up and let her play it "straight" here. Trimmed down and with a rich mane of brunette hair she gives one of her most feral and touching performances since the glory days of **THE BARE BREASTED COUNTESS** (1973). Daniel Katz, whom Franco cast here when he was struck by Katz's uncanny resemblance to cult actor Paul Muller, is quite chilling as Lina's creepy manager. Completing this twisted menage-a-trois, Alicia Principe's Lorna rekindles shades of the sexual voodoo embodied by the awesome Ajita Wilson in **MACUMBA**

SEXUAL (1981). Perhaps Franco's best Golden Films International production, the usually overlooked **MIL SEXOS TIENE LA NOCHE** is well worth searching out.

Robert Monell is the only person I know who actually likes Jesus Franco movies from the eighties.

**LA CASA DEL BUON
RITORNO (1986)
DIRECTED BY BEPPE CINO
REVIEWED BY MIKE LEBBING**

Luca (Stefano Gabrini) and his girlfriend Margit (Amanda Sandrelli) are about to get married. But before entering into matrimony, they decide to spend some time in the house in which Luca grew up, as a sort of small vacation. The house, still nicely furnished, oozes a strange atmosphere and soon Luca gets caught up in his childhood memories. More than 15 years ago, a young girl called Lola (Lola Ledda) was pushed off the balcony. The killer was never caught. This tragic event still haunts Luca, as do memories of weird ceremonies that were performed with other children from the neighbourhood. One of them, Bruno (Francesco Costa), now lives in the house across the lawn and shows an abnormal interest in Luca's whereabouts. Little by little, Luca starts to recreate his childhood; he shaves off his beard and moustache to look boyish again, and surrounds himself with artifacts he finds in the house that remind him of Lola. Also, a woman he vaguely remembers meeting before, Ayesha (Fiammetta Carona), starts to show up on various occasions, enhancing the mystery that surrounds the old villa.

As Luca becomes increasingly ob-

essed with his past, dreams, memories and reality start to play an evil game with the young man and soon he's on the brink of madness. He even sees a black dressed Lola at the market place. After a furious but unsuccessful chase he finds a note written by Lola, "you know where to find me".

Of course, all this is bound to end up terribly wrong. In the bizarre last reel, everybody is killed off violently and the tragic truth is revealed. But a sense of magic lingers on as a strangely "revived" Ayesha looks down upon Luca's corpse, again showing her sensuous smile. Fifteen years ago she told Luca that he couldn't follow her to her domain. Realising the drastic consequences of her kept promise, the end credits appear over Lola's portrait, stained with Bruno's blood.

Though sometimes confusing, **LA CASA DEL BUON RITORNO** makes for some fascinating viewing. The film looks like a cross between the best poetic work of Jean Rollin and Pupi Avati's horror films: the pace is slow, the tone is quiet and the atmosphere dreamlike, yet morbid. Director Cino (who also wrote and produced the film) gives the story a kind of giallo-framework but leaves ample room to build a moody and melancholic film, aided by Antonio Minutolo's beautiful photography and a really great soundtrack from Carlo Siliotto. The film is short on dialogue, but the cast performs well. And while all female cast members are absolutely gorgeous, the lyrical beauty of the film is guaranteed: even during the few slightly dull moments you won't be able to fall asleep, as a semi-close up of Amanda Sandrelli (yep, Stefania's daughter) is indeed in a class of its own. But it's of course the longing to recapture the spirit of childhood that Cino makes the central theme of his film. In this he succeeds brilliantly. What makes **LA CASA...** so special is that it actually manages to create that feeling which Luca is so desperately trying to achieve: the sense of surprise one experiences while seeing something "new". Though obviously made with a low budget,

Cino gives the film a polished look, not only because of the aforementioned photography but also Silvana Fantino's delicate art direction.

And in a strange form of reference to Kaneto Shindo's Japanese classic **ONIBABA** (1964), the creepy mask from that film features prominently in **LA CASA DEL BUON RITORNO!** First, it's worn by Lola before she gets killed, later it's used by the killer, in accordance with the traumatic/fetishistic implications of the typical giallo storyline. Beppe Cino made his first film (a documentary) in 1970, but it was not until the 1980's that he started doing feature films. His directorial work is quite unknown, probably due to the fact that his films are not really marketable. (He's not a keen exploitation director like many of his Italian colleagues, though he worked as an assistant of sorts with a couple of them.) But viewers shouldn't expect a boring arty film when confronted with **LA CASA**, as it has enough visual elegance and eeriness to offer. In fact, those attracted to for example similar downbeat and original films like Francesco Barilli's **PENSIONE PAURA** (1978), should check Cino's film out. It surely is an underrated and undeservedly obscure little film that is as good as anything made by French maestro Jean Rollin, with whose **LEVRES DE SANG** (1975) it shares an intriguing view on the lost spirit of youth.

Thanks to Michael Kopijn.

Mike Lebbing (along with Mike Kopijn) edits the excellent Dutch and English language magazine CAMERA OSCURA. One of these days I promise to print Mike's interview with Laura Betti!



SERGIO SOLLIMA PLAYS COWBOYS AND POLITICS BY RICHARD MENELLO

There are times when a filmmaker so dominates a genre, that he unfairly overshadows other, equally interesting directors working within it. Perhaps the most famous example is the American Western, where it took decades for such excellent artists as Howard Hawks, Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Robert Aldrich and Sam Peckinpah to come out from under the admittedly long shadow of John Ford, and get their fair share of attention from critics and fans alike. Similarly, from the various articles printed in fanzines covering the Italian giallo, one might get the mistaken impression that Dario Argento is not only its creator, but its only practitioner. It took Craig Ledbetter's splendid overview of the genre in these very pages, to alert fans to such worthy talents as Sergio Martino, Umberto Lenzi and Giulio Questi. Of course, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't appreciate certain directors more than others. For instance, though Cannibal movies are not my cup of gore, I'd wager Umberto Lenzi could eat Ruggero Deodato for breakfast (and probably tried, once or twice). Generally, however, giving one director too much coverage works to the detriment of genre.

All of this is by way of introducing Sergio Sollima, who has dwelt in the massive shadow cast over the Italian Western by the portly maestro, Sergio Leone, for far too long. I'm certainly not knocking Leone, who deserves most of the accolades he gets, and directed the two greatest masterpieces in the genre, **THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY** (**IL BUONO, IL BRUTTO, IL CATTIVO**) (67) and **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST** (**C'ERA UNA VOLTA IL WEST**) (68/69). Anyone who follows him, in either the American or Italian western, owes a debt.

Like Argento, he seized upon a loose collection of films and welded them into a wild and wooly genre. Leone is not, however, the only true artist working in what we affectionately call "The Spaghetti Western" by any stretch of the imagination. Sergio Corbucci, Duccio Tessari, and above all, Sergio Sollima come to mind as filmmakers who each created a fascinating and above all, outrageous and entertaining body of work within this under-rated genre, that flourished between 1964 and 1970, before decending into self-parody and then total disintegration a decade later.

Corbucci blends comic book panache and fast paced action in a manner later to be the province of such Hong Kong directors as John Woo and Jackie Chan. His movies come at you in a mad rush of zooms, jump cuts, zip pans and fast tracking shots, but they can sometimes explode into a formless mess, albeit an entertaining one (**THE SPECIALIST, J&S GANG**). His best and most serious work includes **THE BIG SILENCE (IL GRANDE SILENZIO)** (67) and **THE HELLBENDERS (I CRUDELI)** (66), but he is more often known for such adventurous romps as **THE MERCENARY (IL MERCENARIO)** (68) and **COMPANEROS! (VAMOS A MATAR, COMPANEROS)** (70). Tessari's style is less flashy and more relaxed, but it allows for interesting digressions into surrealistic satire (**A PISTOL FOR RINGO**) or lyrical despair (**RETURN OF RINGO**).

And what of Sollima? The hallmarks of his films are a complete command of his visual resources, to make a point or shape a film into an exciting, total experience. The point he is making is most often political, and the cynics in the audience will be happy to find Sollima distrustful of all governments, organizations, corporations and powerful individuals. Power, and how it is used and abused, is Sollima's theme. He is a politically radical artist, a cheerleader for Marxist Revolution in our time, and a damned entertaining director. After all, who the hell would want to know about him just because of his politics,

THE VILLAGE VOICE? This man is one amazing filmmaker, and despite the fact that his political action films are in such supposedly "trashy" genres as the Spaghetti Western and Italian Crime Thriller, he beats the hell out of such overrated political directors as Costa-Gavras (**Z, STATE OF SIEGE**).



Furthermore, although he directed two of the best non-Leone westerns ever made, **THE BIG GUNDOWN** (67) and **FACE TO FACE** (67), and one other lesser but still creditable one, **RUN, MAN, RUN!** (68) he is not limited to this genre by any means. Since the end of the 1960s, Sollima has consistently expanded his style and themes to take in the gangster film (**VIOLENT CITY & REVOLVER**) the psychological melodrama (**A DEVIL IN THE BRAIN**) and the exotic, swashbuckling adventure genre (**SANDOKAN, THE BLACK PIRATE**). While there is an inevitable falling off in intensity and achievement in the later films, from 1967 through the mid-70s his work was utterly consistent. Whereas Corbucci is completely lost outside the western (anybody want to see his historical gangster musical **THE GREATEST (ER PIU')** starring singing superstar and all around asshole Adriano

Celentano again? I didn't think so. Sollima seems able to adapt himself equally well to any genre and maintain his personality within it. Even Duccio Tessari, who has managed an effective non-western occasionally in such genres as the giallo (**DEATH OCCURRED LAST NIGHT & THE BLOOD-STAINED BUTTERFLY**) and the gangster film (**BIG GUNS**), has succeeded because he found an outlet for his lyrical violence, not because he was able to impose his style and themes on more modern material. Even a great director like Leone is diminished when he isn't working within the conventions of the western. As good as **ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA** is, it's just not as rich as his western masterpieces.

Sollima's films, on the other hand, are utterly uniform and consistent no matter what genre they partake of. This doesn't mean some aren't superior to others, but they all seem to be of a piece, part of a satisfying whole. For myself, his masterpieces are undoubtedly **THE BIG GUNDOWN**, **FACE TO FACE** and **REVOLVER**, but **VIOLENT CITY**, **A DEVIL IN THE BRAIN** and the underrated **RUN MAN, RUN!** all have excellent things in them as well. These six films form the core of Sollima's achievement, and they are all filled with action and suspense from beginning to end. Any fan of EuroTrash will certainly find them worth his or her while. Indeed, I would argue that as indebted to Leone as Sollima is, his westerns have a lot more in common with his crime thrillers than they do with Leone's oaters.

The conventions of the Spaghetti Western, as created, more or less by Leone, are adapted and altered by each director to fit his own ends. Corbucci increases the pace and action, while Tessari alternately plays the buffoon (**DON'T TURN THE OTHER CHEEK**) or the poet (**THE RETURN OF RINGO**). Sollima uses the larger than life visual style pioneered by Leone to express ideas or highlight his themes. While Leone's gunfights have the feeling of an opera or

ballet, Sollima's have the quality of a precise, deadly game. Indeed, this theme of game playing and strategic one upmanship runs throughout all of his films. Powerful, usually Machiavellian political forces hover over the outcome, as Sollima's heroes and anti-heroes participate in a cat and mouse game for the highest stakes of all, their lives. He is second to none in his ability to express himself visually, and orchestrate action. The gunfights in **THE BIG GUNDOWN**, **FACE TO FACE** and **RUN MAN, RUN!** are just the most obvious examples of this. While the shootouts in **THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY** and **ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST** go beyond their function in the story, to take on an abstract beauty, Sollima's are almost as outlandish, but always firmly rooted in suspense and character. It is with chases and action set pieces that Sollima really shines, though. The desperate hunt through the cane fields for Cuchillo (Tomas Milian) in **THE BIG GUNDOWN**, the lethal ride of the vigilantes and their pursuit of The Savage Pack in **FACE TO FACE**, and Jeff Heston's (Charles Bronson) flight from the police and his ghostly shooting of Vanessa (Jill Ireland) in a sound-proofed elevator in **VIOLENT CITY** (aka **THE FAMILY**) are but a few masterful and imaginative examples of Sollima's undervalued abilities. The much lauded scene between Clint Eastwood and John Malkovich in the glass elevator in **IN THE LINE OF FIRE** is kid's stuff compared to Sollima's sequence in **VIOLENT CITY**.

I could go on forever about Sollima's visual style, but that would only send you guys scurrying to the next nude layout on Barbara Bouchet or Brigitte Lahaie (she really does look better as a blonde), so I'll just say you'll have to see it to believe it.

By now, you're either wondering how Sergio Sollima got started, or asking yourself if the name "Sergio" is a requirement for success as a Spaghetti Western director. The answer to the second question is no, but it helps. The answer to the first is a bit more

involved. Like so many of his contemporaries, Sollima began as a film critic in post-World War II Italy. After authoring a few volumes of Film History, he managed to make the acquaintance of several producers. In the chaos that was (and still is) the Italian Film Industry, Sollima parlayed his critical credentials into a screenwriting job. His first effort fell within the genre most feared by fans of EuroTrash; more horrific than even a cannibal or zombie movie, Sollima wrote a musical comedy. Does anyone really want to hear about **CAROUSEL OF SONG (CAROSELLO DI CANZONE)**? I didn't think so. As a teenager, many's the time I'd schlep all the way to the Walker Theater in Brooklyn, or The Felt Forum in Manhattan for a special Italian language movie program, intent on finally catching Corbucci's **DJANGO** or Fulci's **MASSACRE TIME**. The box office would invariably screw up the times, and I'd end up having to sit through some absurd Italian musical comedy first. Have you ever spent what seems like the entire running time of **BEN HUR** watching a creature called "Little Tony" warble endless cheap ditties in something called **I GANGSTER VENUTO A BROOKLYN (GANGSTER OF BROOKLYN)**? How about that pint-sized homunculus Rita Pavone in **RITA, LA ZANZARA (RITA, THE MOSQUITO)**. No? Well, count yourself lucky.

Equally lucky for readers of this magazine, Sollima soon proved himself adept at creating tales of action and adventure. In the Italy of the early 1960s, this meant a lucrative career churning out scripts for peplums, or sword and sandal flicks as they were sometimes called. One of these, **TEN GLADIATORS (I DIECI GLADIATORI)** became a sizeable box office hit in Italy, and was even released in the USA, where it found a home on television all through the decade (remember the bald guy with the handlebar moustache, who throws a trident into the villain's stomach at the end? Well, I do). During this period, Sollima also toiled as an assistant

director, intently observing all the action on the set for the time when he, too, would step behind the megaphone. In 1962, he even directed a short episode titled **THE WOMEN (LE DONNE)** for a multi-part romantic flick, **DIFFICULT LOVE (L'AMORE DIFFICILE)**. The time wasn't right for a change, obviously, because Sollima never went back to his typewriter until 1965.

The spy craze was in full swing by this time and Sollima had written a few of these films as well. He agreed to provide the scripts for two productions to be shot back to back, on the condition he be allowed to direct them. The results were interesting, if not particularly inspiring. Featuring handsome B-movie Italian leading man, Giorgio Ardisson, who later switched to slick villains, **AGENT 353: PASSPORT TO HELL (AGENTE 353: PASSPORT A INFERNO)** and **AGENT 353: MASSACRE IN THE SUN (AGENTE 353: MASSACRO AL SOLE)** are important only for the experience behind the camera they afforded their director. Like most European entries into the James Bond sweepstakes, they were fast paced and forgettable. Sollima used the pseudonym of "Simon Sterling" for their release in Italy as well as the rest of the world, so perhaps he wished to distance himself from the results.

The success of these espionage thrillers led to an offer of another, more elaborate project in the same genre. This time, Sollima took things a lot more seriously, and **REQUIEM FOR A SECRET AGENT (REQUIEM PER UN AGENTE SEGRETO)** (1966) is the true start of his directing career, and his first real film. Stewart Granger is both suave and tough as "Bingo", a master spy who is catnip to the ladies and poison to his enemies. Paired with an idealistic bespectacled young rookie agent, Bingo is sent to the Middle East on a vital mission for NATO. There, he matches wits and fists with a deadly villain, played by Peter Van Eyck (who is sort of a German Stewart Granger). The mission itself is a MacGuffin in true Hitchcockian sense

and doesn't matter much. It is an excuse for Sollima to stage some rousing action scenes, and concentrate on the main character. Even a casual viewer will see that the director has something very serious on his mind when it comes to Bingo. Clearly, this is an attempt to expose the supposedly cool James Bond persona, as the cold, vicious brute Sollima undoubtedly thinks he really is. Luckily for fans of EuroTrash, this means Granger gets to perform some particularly entertaining, nasty acts and does so with gusto. After an exciting fight in an alley, Bingo grabs an enemy agent and threatens to break his arm if he doesn't tell all he knows. The agent spills the beans, and Bingo breaks his arm anyway. "But, he talked!" gasps the outraged rookie agent. "What'd you expect me to do, kiss him?" is Bingo's savage reply. Later, a middle aged man and wife, who know something vital, wake up in the middle of the night only to find Bingo looming over their bed. He threatens and roughs up the old man, and eventually gets what he wants. Upon leaving the bedroom, he says, "This time you woke up scared. Next time you'll wake up dead!". As entertainingly absurd lines go, this ranks right up there with "If you die, I'll kill you!" from Samuel Fuller's **STEEL HELMET** and **BIG RED ONE**. Ultimately, **REQUIEM FOR A SECRET AGENT** is about the clash between Bingo, who believes in doing anything necessary to defeat the enemy no matter how dirty, and the rookie, who thinks Bingo is just as bad as the enemy. Sollima provides some nice directorial touches along the way. In the opening scene, a man hears footsteps and searches the house with his gun drawn. He thinks the footsteps are coming from behind a curtain, and fires, only to be shot from behind by an assassin. The assassin then picks up a tape recorder from behind the curtain. It plays a tape of footsteps. Clever moments like this abound in **REQUIEM FOR A SECRET AGENT**. Ironically, considering how good Granger is as "Bingo", Sollima mentioned that he thought the actor was some-

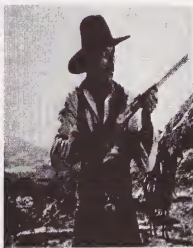
what miscast in the role. Granger actually projects just the right combination of charm and ruthlessness to make it all work. Sollima should have worried less about his star, and more about the character's name. Bingo is not the name of a suave but deadly spy. Bingo is the name of a dog who sat on a porch.

There was ample evidence of heretofore undiscovered directorial talent in **REQUIEM FOR A SECRET AGENT**, but with **THE BIG GUNDOWN (LA RESA DEL CONTI/THE SETTling OF ACCOUNTS)** (67), Sollima took a quantum leap forward few could have predicted. One of the very best films in its genre, and a major reason for this article, **THE BIG GUNDOWN** is a compelling, exciting film from start to finish. If **REQUIEM FOR A SECRET AGENT** touches on political themes, with its condemnation of cold war expediency and its critique of the Bond craze, **THE BIG GUNDOWN** positively wallows in them. This is all to the good, because Sollima doesn't get preachy and long winded when he deals with political subjects. He uses the politics to drive the story forward and make the action scenes more intense. Spaghetti Western icon Lee Van Cleef is at his weather beaten best as Jonathan Corbett, a legendary lawman who is asked by the wealthy, influential Brockston (Walter Barnes in a robust performance) to run for the Senate. Brockston is hoping to put Corbett in office and use him to help ram a trans-continental railroad from the U.S. to Mexico through Congress. Corbett is skeptical of Brockston, but when a Mexican peasant named Cuchillo (Tomas Milian) is charged with raping and killing a ten year old girl, Corbett agrees to strap on his guns at Brockston's behest and track the man down. Corbett and Cuchillo play cat and mouse across the prairie, with the Mexican usually outwitting his adversary. The tale is episodic, but tightly constructed, and Corbett eventually realizes that Cuchillo has in fact been framed for the crime by Brockston. How

Corbett and Cuchillo join forces to outwit the tycoon and discover the real rapist/murderer, who is in fact Brockston's son-in-law, forms the breathless climax of **THE BIG GUNDOWN**. Sollima uses each episode of the story to emphasize another aspect of the way in which Cuchillo and Corbett have both become victims of a system controlled by men like Brockston. Corbett, a man who has believed in the Law and Justice all his life, discovers they are just commodities to be bought and sold by the highest bidder. The scenes themselves are outrageous and alternately comic and suspenseful. Things are hardly ever how they seem; a lonely widow who runs a ranch is in fact a sadistic dominatrix who forces her hired hands to beat the hell out of each other for her amusement. Corbett races to save what he thinks is a virginal little girl from Cuchillo's clutches at a river bank, and is stabbed for his trouble. He then discovers this innocent little girl is in fact the fifth wife of a grinning, grubby looking Mormon. Similarly, when Corbett journeys to Mexico in pursuit of his quarry and is questioned by a Mexican Police Chief, he tries to shock the man into helping him by saying Cuchillo "Raped a ten year old girl". "Was she pretty?" is the Police Chief's disinterested reply, "Was she your sister? What are you doing here, gringo?" The fact that Fernando Sancho plays the Police Chief in his classic grotesque, politically incorrect, but lovable style, makes the scene even more effective.

Cuchillo himself is portrayed superbly by Tomas Milian. Although the character has a comic side, and is pretty much of a scalawag, Milian manages to avoid the usual cliché of the grubby peon (though Cuchillo is understandably covered with mud for most of the film) and turns him into a delightful, sympathetic, three dimensional character. Given the film's political edge, it helps that Cuchillo is actually played by a Latino actor (Milian hails from Cuba) instead of an Italian with the usual dark pancake makeup. **THE BIG GUNDOWN** is the film that made Milian a

star in Italy, where he is still popular to this day. He and Van Cleef work together smoothly, the looser, more free wheeling Milian playing off Van Cleef's grave, serious persona to create an entertaining relationship.



In addition to Milian, Sancho and Barnes, there are many memorable actors supporting Van Cleef in **THE BIG GUNDOWN**. None is more bizarre or outlandish than Gerard Herter as Bachmann, the German assassin who works for Brockston. Intentionally dressed and made up like one of the Prussian officers in Eric Von Stroheim's silent classic **THE MERRY WIDOW**, Herter is all mechanical movements and sharp angles. His special break-away holster, which gives him the fastest draw around, is a wonderful gimmick. He also gets one of the film's best lines on the morning of the big hunt for Cuchillo. "The sun looks like a ball of blood. That's for those of you who believe in foresight". In the end, Brockston organizes a group of men to hunt down and kill Cuchillo like a wild animal. This precipitates the magnificent "Hunt Through The Cane Fields"

segment, shot and edited to one of Ennio Morricone's most powerful themes. Indeed, the collaboration between Morricone and Sollima, which extended over five films, bears comparison to that of Morricone and Leone.

Corbett eventually takes Cuchillo's side against Brockton, leading to Brockton's witty final line to Corbett. "You're just too damn smart to be a Senator". I won't say anymore, so as not to spoil the ending, but the final segment of **THE BIG GUNDOWN** features not one, but two elaborate gunfights, one in which Cuchillo throws his knife into somebody's forehead!

The author of the original story that the film was based on, Franco Solinas, was less than thrilled with the changes Sollima made. A writer known for both his mainstream efforts (**BATTLE OF ALGIERS**, **BURN!**) and his occasional classy westerns (**A BULLET FOR GENERAL**, **THE MERCENARY**), Solinas originally set the story in the Sardinian region of Italy. Cuchillo's character was an elderly Italian peasant who was active in local politics. He is framed for raping and killing a little girl, and a young, ambitious Italian cop is sent after him. Learning the peasant is innocent, the cop kills him anyway, to further his career. Sollima, in collaboration with writer Sergio Donati, and aided by some suggestions from his friend Leone, altered both the story and its tone considerably, resulting in **THE BIG GUNDOWN**. Solinas was probably disturbed that the film turned out to be a "trashy" Spaghetti Western, but in fact it is far superior to most of Solinas's more pretentious mainstream efforts.

A word here about Sergio Donati, who co-scripted both **THE BIG GUNDOWN** and Sollima's follow-up, **FACE TO FACE** (**FACCIA A FACCIA**) (67). One of Italy's finest writers, Donati must be given some credit for the tight scripts for these films and their excellent dialogue. After the success of these two movies, Sergio Leone tapped Donati to co-write **ONCE UPON A TIME IN**

THE WEST and **DUCK, YOU SUCKER** with him. Since these are Leone's most overtly political films, Donati must be at least partially responsible. On the eve of directing his first film, a political thriller about yellow journalism titled **SLAP THE MONSTER ON PAGE ONE** (**SBATTI IL MOSTRO IN PRIMA PAGINA**) starring Gian Maria Volonte, Donati fell ill and was replaced by the more mainstream Marco Bellocchio. The results were highly interesting, if a bit uneven.

COMING IN PART 2



Tomas Milian from FACE TO FACE

EURO-TRASH COMMENTS

I heard of you guys from a friend of mine. He suggested you people because I was home all day with nothing to do. I just quit from my dead end job (*No doubt you were working as a linguist-ED*) and now I get bored at my house. I would like to know more about the movies you review. Does it have a plot? I mean, it's no fun if there's no point (*Much like this letter-ED*). Do you think you could send me a free sample? If you do I can guarantee (*sic*) I get more from you.

Longley
Carrollton, TX

I'm ashamed to be living in the same state as you.

ETC #10 arrived safely, was read cover to cover in next to no time and enjoyed very much. The one disappointment was in reading that the detailed filmographies are a thing of the past. As always I enjoyed the reviews and I thought that Steve Fentone's Euro-Crime article was particularly good. **GANG WAR IN MILAN** sounds like a must see. Charles Bucklin's heart is obviously in the right place and although the subject matter was a bit lightweight, I thought his piece was well written. The charms of Carmen Russo seem infinitely preferable and less pretentious than those of Vanessa Paradis, no way is she Euro-Trash.

Neil Kerr
Scotland

If someone wants to go to the trouble of sending in detailed filmographies, legibly typed and printed, then I will use them. Otherwise, if I have to generate them, it ain't gonna happen.

Just received ETC #10. Excellent issue! The zine kept my interest from front to back.

Believe it or not, the only article I found Ho-Hum was the piece on Carmen Russo. Though quite a "piece" herself, the article failed to capture my curiosity. Shootin' the Shit was highly informative and entertaining. It's great to see old ETC favorites like Mattei, Martino and Massi still able to crank 'em out with so little support behind them. **EYES WITHOUT A FACE** sounds like a true BAD MOVIE classic. Steve Fentone's Euro-Crime along with Erik Sulev's Black Emanuelle article were great reads. Has Laura Gemser ever done any hardcore scenes? (*No-ED*) After reading both parts of the Pica interview, I simply cannot understand why this guy even acted in any films. His condescending attitude sucked!!

Ray Ranaletta
Hamlin, NY

Steve Fentone's gangster reviews left me wanting additional entries. Sounds like they really cranked the mafia movies out. My favorite ETC piece was Sulev's Black Emanuelle survey. I now have something to evaluate what's what in the series. I also enjoyed the chronicles of your MIFED visit.

Jeff Segal
Bensalem, PA

Once again, much thanks for a fabulous read. Oh, and regards to the Carmen Russo boob controversy-quel controversy? Unlike the natural wonders of Pilar Orive, Signora Russo's massive, misshapen ticket-sellers are clearly spawned by technology. Loved the rest of the issue, particularly Steve Fentone's piece on Italo-mob movies. In fact it left me hungry for more, perhaps an issue-length survey a la ETC #6's Giallo review.

Frederick Rappaport
Los Angeles, CA

I like how the covers change from artwork to stills and back again. I noticed my name was absent from the picture credits (*Sorry Dan! Now that this is a one-man operation, those types of mistakes should be lessened-ED*), it was probably too long anyway! Good to hear you'll be selling Euro-CDs. Shootin' the Shit continues to be a favorite of mine. The trip overseas sounded great! Too bad the movies you saw didn't. Letters are always fun to read (no matter what publication), glad to hear someone besides myself miss the filmographies. It was good to read Steve Bissette's review of **THE CRAWLERS**, he's certainly a great writer who doesn't get featured enough in genre publications. Enjoyed Sargent's **GIALLO A VENEZIA** review, although before reading it I didn't think much more could be written about this (covered-to-death) film. Steve Fentone's Euro-Crime reviews were good, however, I wish someone would write a huge article on all of them (hey, maybe a special "Crime" issue of ETC like the Giallo one is in order?). (*Gee, I wonder what people are trying to tell me?-ED*) I liked the second part of the Castellari Interview better than the first. I loved it when he talked about the time he first saw the **SINBAD** movie! Really enjoyed Sulev's Black Emanuelle article, after reading it I wondered why someone had not done this sooner. I always thought Gemser was in more Black Emanuelle films. This was probably my favorite piece this issue.

Dan Pydynkowski
Danvers, MA



I've found out something that might interest you. I was reading in the NY Post about how Gloria Swanson was going to do a musical of **SUNSET BLVD.** in the mid-fifties. She was involved with two young gay song writers, who wrote the music and lyrics for the show, which was to be called "STARRING NORMA DESMOND". One of the two writers was also a handsome young actor named Richard Stapley who played supporting roles in several US action movies of the fifties, including **TARGET ZERO** with Charles Bronson. Swanson developed a huge crush on Stapley and didn't care that he was gay and had a lover, but when Stapley had an affair with a woman, Swanson went ballistic. Anyway, the project eventually fell through when Paramount refused to renew her option on the original film. Stapley eventually went to Italy and Spain where he starred in numerous Spaghetti Westerns (such as **THE UGLY ONES**) and even Jesus Franco's **FUTURE WOMEN** as Richard Wyler. To make things even more bizarre, the success of Andrew Lloyd Webber's **SUNSET BLVD.** has led to a low budget musical about Swanson and her two young collaborators working on their aborted version, using the original songs and currently playing to good notices in Los Angeles. Stapley was even in the audience and had some comments. It's always fascinating to find out the backgrounds on some of these Eurotrash stars, but this is one of the oddest.

Richard Menello
New Jersey

COMING NEXT ISSUE
Interviews with actors Brett Halsey, William Berger, and director Antonio Bido, more Euro-Crime reviews by Steve Fentone, and a special section of horror film reviews!!

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